

PRESBYTERY PORT PHILLIP WEST

NOVEMBER 5TH 2020—NEWSLETTER NO.19



Reflection from Synod Intercultural Forum Speaker Rev. Dr. Randy S. Woodley Rev. Juliette Tautala'aso



When asked to write a reflection on *Rev Dr Randy S. Woodley's* engaging online presentation, ***“Re-imagining Faith and Theology from a non-Western Paradigm”*** (13th Oct), one niggling controversial question since Randy's timely and provoking conversation was: “I wonder how many attendees, and those who could not/would not sign up for whatever reason, were initially uncomfortable or dismissive at first read, of the Seminar heading?”!

If you did hesitate to sign up or attended with presuppositions, ask yourself - *why?! Was it this latter part, “...from a non-Western Paradigm”, that may have put you off? Maybe not? But if so, might you let this be a starting point to open ajar the door into engaging non-Western paradigms and understandings, and let it come from non-Western peoples more regularly; something the West have been prone to dismiss.*

In this spirit, I so welcomed Dr Woodley's methodological presentation 'from a non-Western Paradigm' lens. The manner and authentic way in which Dr Woodley implored us to seek out our own indigenous wisdom in the gifts our First Nations Peoples hold, in their most ancient culture, did not go unnoticed.

Dr Woodley's grounded theological and faith understanding shared with us was often intertwined in retelling Indigenous stories of his Keetoowah Cherokee people; stories passed on by his ancestors and continues its legacy. This resonated in the parallel and similarities of my own Samoan oratory cultural tradition.

As a third people's person, a bicultural woman calling Australia home, I wonder too, if our 'uncomfortable awkwardness' is the raw nerve of our blind spot to call out prolonged social issues of our time. That is, white privilege, racism, our reluctance to fully grant treaty and sovereignty to our own First Nations Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Perhaps these very things that we often refuse to face up and commit to truth-telling the real Australian Indigenous her-story and his-story, that is Australia's colonial history, is the very basis that prevents and prolongs our walking together, embodied and embracing as the Body of Christ, towards liberation, equality, and lasting reconciliation and reparations.

Such observations, Dr Woodley, has personally experienced and teaches in his peoples' quest for sovereignty, and towards First Nations Peoples' treaty in the United States. **These are the challenges that echoed, and re-echo, in my post seminar reflections. May they continue...**

Reimagining Faith

Re-imagining the Faith from an Indigenous Perspective. **Rev. Will Picket**



From the outset I want to say that I was encouraged by Dr Randy Woodley's presentation and that his story of the Turtle was awesome. I realised that much of his recount of History of First Nations people in America's experiences of Colonisation resonated with my own history and life experiences.

Let me say that, Indigenous peoples, whether in Australia, the Americas, Africa or Asia, have all experienced the cultural invasion of Western civilisation over the past 500 years, accompanied by its handmaid, structured religious practice in the guise of many expressions of Christianity, which, in essence, regarded all Indigenous religious expression as inferior and therefore unworthy of any acceptance.

For nearly 250 years Aboriginal cultural expression, both in story and understanding of our unique environment, suffered this fate. Colonial ignorance initially sought to snuff out our very existence, while devaluing all that sustained us, because our language and our ways were deemed incomprehensible and therefore to be discarded.

Looked at realistically, the structured and hierarchical nature of colonial church life that came to Australia, purporting to be the living expression of Christianity, was in many ways an unintended heresy. It imagined its expression of religious belief and societal ordering was ordained by God, resulting in Western religion, law, language and even skin colour claimed as superior, which by implication rendered all other cultures and people as inferior; needing to be changed, tamed or eliminated.

Because of this imperialistic approach, no matter how well-intended, many Indigenous people view anyone claiming Christian belief as either betraying their culture, or pandering to a simplistic missionary theology that in essence becomes a new form of colonial bondage.

However, in my own personal understanding of being a follower of Jesus, hierarchical structures have no place, any more than viewing the environment as something to be subjugated purely for personal or corporate gain. In my reading of Scripture, Jesus calls us all to be as one, in harmony with one another, not as slaves, but as equals.

As a proud Noongar man from the South West of Western Australia, my ancestors believed in the intimate connection between the human and spiritual realms. They were seen as indivisible, whereas traditional Western belief sought to distinguish between the realm of God and the realm of the world, namely that which is of God and that which is of the earth and all that is in it. My culture, by contrast, would say such a separation is alien to the creative spirit, because it seeks to divide that which is ultimately indivisible.

As Jesus used parables, so my people use Dreamtime stories that talk of how all before our eyes came into being. Just as the people of Israel handed down their tradition orally from one generation to the next, so too with my people. I find no inconsistency in talking of an Indigenous Creator Spirit in the same way as I may speak of the God of Creation, taken from an ancient Hebrew culture, but made universal.

In this 21st Century I believe it is time we started to listen to the voices and beliefs of a once colonised people, in order that we might arrive at a deeper understanding of what is traditionally called the "Faith of the Fathers".

Just as there is wide recognition Indigenous people know a thing or two about the care and maintenance of the environment, perhaps there might also be something said of how traditional Indigenous belief can enrich and expand our understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

(Rev Dr Randy S. Woodley – associate professor of faith and culture and director of indigenous and intercultural studies at George Fox Seminary, Portland, Oregon. A Keetoowah Cherokee.

Books: "Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity"; "Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision"; and recently "Decolonizing



Mental Health Matters

Rev Fiona Bottcher [Deacon]

During my ministry formation, I was fortunate to complete a placement with Rev Natalie Dixon-Monu at Boroondara Community Outreach (BCO). BCO is a mental health ministry based in Kew supporting people who are socially isolated or living with a mental illness. It's a model of ministry I continually look to for inspiration.



The BCO ministry embodies an expression of faith that has inclusion and hospitality at its core. And as well as supporting people to live with dignity and engage in community, it is also a congregation. To ensure their (pre coronavirus) monthly services are as accessible as possible, they are held in the church hall, next to the actual church. It is in this space that chairs and people can move freely, tables can be set with drinks and snacks, and a meal can be served straight after the service.

I've been more nervous delivering a short "sermon" for this congregation than any other. Because at BCO you don't "own the floor", people can question and interject as they please, and they regularly do. There's an accountability that can't be ignored.

The Nurture and Spiritual Guidance of Children

Nov 25-27, Dec 1,2, Parkville

This excellent [professional development opportunity](#) from **Pilgrim College** is for **Ministers, Chaplains, Pastors, Thoughtful Practitioners** and **Christian Educators** and. Especially suitable for **church-based, school-based** and **community-based** expressions of ministry, participants will...

- Develop more richly theologically-informed practice in relation to the spiritual nurture of children
- Examine links between Scripture, theological thought, spiritual and psychological development
- Explore spiritual formation processes in the educational, congregational and missional settings
- Increase their capacity for care of children in the context of family, church and broader society

More information: [2020 Intensive](#) or e-mail Erlinda.loveSeed@pilgrim.edu.au



LAST Code of Ethics November 6th 2pm

Topic Grooming
Book NOW on Trybooking:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BLMJ0>

Ministry Agents' Chat

11th November
4 - 5:30pm

9 minutes @ 9

PPW Presbytery Ministers pledging to pray with you twice a day...

NAIDOC week and the many activities being run in and around our Presbytery.

Those in hospital or facing surgery, or those who are recovering from a stay in hospital.

Teachers coming to the close of a very tough year.

Those still waiting for the opportunity to celebrate their wedding with friends and family.

The impending possibilities for Melburnians to be able to go and visit loved ones and even get away for a few days.

America and the unrest being experienced as a result of the election.

And we continue to pray for those experiencing grief in these trying times.

Jeanne Beale

SYNOD COVID links

Recovery Action Plan Check List
FAQ's Vic Regional & Metro Melbourne
Church Facilities reopening Check List
Visitor Contact Logs
Cleaning Info Sheets

<https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/> Check Regularly!

PPW POSTCARD

St.Luke's and Western Heights UCA shared worship on 1st November and celebrated "All Saints Day" inviting people to light a candle for those who have died during the last year. To light a candle for a loved one, in their own homes. Very fitting since many have been grieving and unable to travel to mourn with family during COVID-19.

eLM Events

YEAR B Lectionary Conference online:

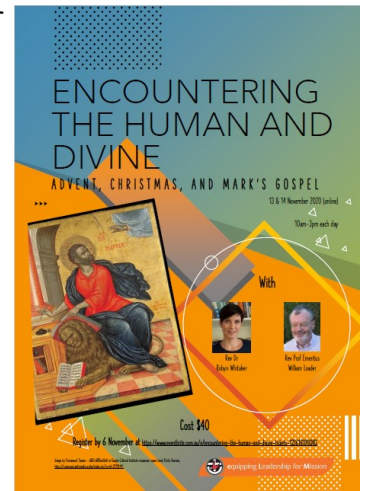
[Encountering the Human and Divine: Advent, Christmas and Mark's Gospel 2021](#)

Rev Dr Robyn Whitaker
Rev Prof Emeritus Bill Loader:

November 13 and 14.

This will be a great opportunity for refreshing the focus and themes of Mark's gospel to prepare for Advent and Christmas.

Suitable for preachers and teachers...



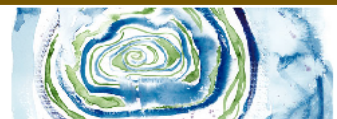
PPW

Presbytery in Council

NEW DATE November 28th

9:30 Cuppa & Covid Chat

bethel
centre
COUNSELLING, EDUCATION, CARE



Creative Calm

A Bethel Centre group for those in ministry

Connect and unwind.

Sketch, knit, sew, journal ... Whatever your creative pursuit or aspiration, bring it along. Or be supported in choosing something to try.

No skill required – you don't have to be 'creative'!

You will come away with ...

- Ideas for refuelling and re-energising yourself.
- Strategies to make time for rest and reflection.
- How to use these strategies to form new habits.

Hosted on Zoom by Julie McDonald
Weekly for four weeks on Wednesdays 2-3pm.
November 11, 18, 25, December 2.
Come for one or more sessions.

Register now to secure your place by emailing support@bethelcentre.com.au. For information, call or text Julie on 0425 707 583.

Regenerating the Church: Missional Mapping

Rev. Linley Liersch (PPW Mission Development Strategist & eLM)

I was driving down a new section of the Western Highway, a part of the roads bi-fication project. According to the Satellite Navigation I was driving through a paddock. The SatNav wanted to send me on a 'U-turn back down the highway' —quite a dangerous move actually because it would send me into head-on traffic. I should have remembered to update my satnav so the new maps for this section of road could be downloaded? Or was this section of road so new that not even google maps had taken photos of it yet! Perhaps there is an area like this near you, where the streetscape has changed.

Perhaps this is a metaphor for ministry and mission at the moment. You are holding all the old maps but none of them help. It used to be true that if you are a 'good and caring teacher/preacher' you will reach your community and the pews would be filled on Sunday morning. But it is no longer true. Perhaps you run events throughout the week, make good contacts with people, but it does not translate into more people attending church. The Church is operating on existing internal maps, that identify us, containing stories, the habits and practices that we develop over time.



https://cdn.supadupa.me/shop/14281/images/1911491/port_philip_1886_frame_massive.jpg?1431457967 Edit.

More and more the old maps no longer make sense of the context in which we live. Our maps about how church should work, no longer match the world we have tumbled into. We live in a world with Multiple religious views or no religious views. There is a mistrust of the institution that gave us our identity as nurturers of God's people. There are people in the church that believe... they can navigate this new terrain with the old maps that got them to this place. Alan Roxborough '*Missional Map-Making: Skills for leading in times of Transition*' suggests it is a dangerous illusion to believe we can rely on the old maps to navigate this new world! Why because it sends us into a 'U-turn'. To do a 'U-turn' is to keep doing the same things and expecting different results.

Recently the ministers from Greater Geelong got together on-line to begin a conversation about 'what old maps do we hold as a church?' Some suggestions were: *That we live in a Christian society. One minister per congregation. No leadership vacuums. We need a big Sunday school. Church is at the center of society....* If you asked your local church what 'old maps' would they add to this list?

We are leaders in an 'emergent' church. Something is dying and something different is being born. We are in a new space – and we do not as yet have the maps for it. We need a way to form our own maps, we need to become map-makers. I call this being 'Cartographers for the Kingdom'! We have crossed a threshold and entered into a new space where the maps we've created profoundly mis-direct us. We need to be given tools to become map makers in local churches, so we can become cartographers for a new terrain.

Gippsland Presbytery has begun a 'Fig Tree project' which is about congregations working together across regions. They are looking at the idea of what it means to be an 'emergent' church. Of living with the uncertainty of what the future church looks like but being willing to journey together. Our presbytery had the 'Regenerating the Church' as a way to make new maps into the unknown.

It is clear that the power of old maps continues to shape the church, and will not be easily be thrown off. The spirit of God, however is hovering over the church, just as the spirit hovered in the creation story. The voice of God is being spoken over the church. I hear the voice of God calling us, as a Uniting Church, to be a '**pilgrim people...the people of God on the way to the promised end.**' I discern that this phrase from the Basis of Union will hold promise for us in the years ahead. And I am awaiting with hope for the fullness of this statement to be revealed. Perhaps we were never meant to be a church that is standing still, but to be a church in movement in time with the world around us.

Recently someone said to me 'Covid has forced the church to jump into the future.' I asked him 'has it forced us to jump into the future', that would imply that we are ahead? Or has it forced us to 'Jump into the present', to catch up because we were behind. Now our church is moving at a pace of the world around us. Do we want to 'U-turn' back to normal? Or do we begin to make maps for the new world?